



It's time to pay Delaware employees fairly

By Thomas J. O'Hagan

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The workers of Delaware should be honored and thankful. The Delaware Wage Facts Coalition has been formed by the Delaware Restaurant Association, Delaware State Chamber of Commerce, National Federation of Independent Business, Delaware Food Industry Council, Mid-Atlantic Petroleum Dealers Association and the chambers of commerce from New Castle County, Central Delaware and Rehoboth Beach-Dewey Beach.

Jessica Cooper, state director of NFIB, said the association was formed because, "There's a lot of rhetoric being bantered about regarding minimum wage, and it's sometimes difficult to sift through the nonsense to find the facts. We realized that by forming Delaware Wage Facts Coalition, we would be able to educate the public and our Legislature on the real impact that raising wages has on jobs and our smallest employers."

I am sure no one is surprised that this helpful coalition of business supporters is against any increase in the minimum wage, as it would ultimately hurt the worker. To prove it they cite a multitude of statistics, some of which were developed by the CATO institute - a libertarian think tank founded by Charles G. Koch and funded by the Koch brothers. I am tired of hearing about the poor businessperson. Those who pay the minimum wage or wages close to it are living off the backs of their workers.

A living wage in Delaware is at least \$15 an hour plus benefits. Many employers do not provide health insurance, annual leave, sick leave or maternity leave to their employees. Nor do they provide prorated benefits to part-time or long-term temporary employees. To make matters even worse, many employees have to rely on food stamps, Medicaid, federal and Delaware state earned income tax credits and other government benefits to make ends meet.

This means that employers paying low wages are having part of their employees' earnings subsidized by the government. We have all read how the numbers of poor are increasing, the middle class is shrinking and their wages are falling, all while the rich get richer. It is time for elected officials to start caring about the people who put them into office instead of those they play golf and/or socialize with. It is time for employees to start protesting for higher wages, asking unions to help them organize, demand legislation favorable to the worker from their government representatives and hold them accountable at election time.

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